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## MISCELLANEOUS JOURNAL.

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### SCHOOL EDUCATION.

THE subject of Education has, for some time past, occupied no inconsiderable share of the public attention in the United States; and the elements of a good education are, perhaps, sufficiently well understood in theory by many persons among us, who have read and reflected upon it with that just discrimination, which a subject of this nature demands. But the practical method of conferring such an education, or, in other words, the *art of education*, if we may judge from the different effects produced in Europe and in this country, is yet in a very imperfect state among us. Those intelligent Americans, who have travelled in Europe, all concur in the opinion, that there is a wide difference between a well-educated *European* and what we are accustomed to consider as a well-educated gentleman in the United States. Now, after making all due allowance for the greater length of time employed in an European education, much of this difference still remains to be accounted for in some other way; and how is it to be accounted for? I have long believed, that it is in a great measure owing to our not being thoroughly skilled in what may properly be called the *art of education*. I do not stop here, to inquire into the causes of this state of things. How much of it may be the consequence of our Revolution—how much, the effect of local circumstances—or how much, the result of unsettled opinions in the different parts of our country as to the relative importance of science and of classical learning, need not at present be examined. It is sufficient for my purpose to assume it as a fact (which, indeed, is admitted by the very apologies we are accustomed to make for it) and proceed to inquire into the means of remedying this radical imperfection in our modes of education.

Here, perhaps, it may be said—If we are not yet in possession of the best practical methods of instruction employed in Europe, we can, surely, by diligent inquiry learn them, and then proceed to apply them ourselves. We may, undoubtedly,

by careful and minute inquiries, acquaint ourselves with those methods, as we do in the case of other arts ; but yet the practical skill to apply them with effect, seems to be still wanting. The truth is, (and all our liberal and well-informed teachers candidly acknowledge it,) that we have not had a degree of *experience* in education to be at all compared with that of our European brethren ; for they have been constantly engaged for centuries, and under circumstances vastly more favourable than ourselves, in perfecting the art of education. What course then, it may be asked, ought we to pursue in this country ? I have no hesitation in saying, that the people of America must do as other nations have done ; as in ancient times the Romans did, when they sent to Greece for their instructors ; and, as at the present day the less learned nations of Europe do, when they hold out inducements to able professors from their more learned neighbours to come and reside among them. Nor let it be thought, as some superficial reasoners have persuaded themselves, that this would derogate at all from the dignity of our national character ; for surely we need feel no repugnance in yielding to any thing, to which the brave and proud Romans thought it no disgrace to submit. Cicero and Cæsar both studied under Greek masters,\* and shall our independence of spirit and love of country take alarm at what they felt to be no stain upon their characters ? We are accustomed to believe, and are pleased with the belief, that our European brethren, in some other instances, think it no disgrace to borrow from us our native artists and our arts ; why then should we feel any repugnance to being under the like obligations to them in the art of education ? Until we shall be willing to do this (to a certain extent at least) it is much to be feared, that our children will not derive all those advantages from education which it is our duty to afford them. On this point I shall take the liberty of laying before the reader, in support of my opinion, the remarks of a learned friend, who has thoroughly examined the best European systems of education, and whose authority, if I were at liberty to name him, would need no aid to give this opinion its due weight. He had been requested to furnish a particular account of the course of studies pursued in the schools of France, which he obligingly complied with ; but, after giving as satisfactory a detail as was practicable, he subjoins the fol-

\* Cic. Brut. cap. 89. and Plutarch in Vita Cæsar, cap. 3.

lowing reflections, which cannot be too strongly recommended to the attention of all.

‘ Allow me to close this letter, my dear Sir, with expressing the gratification I feel, at finding you interested in the subject of *school education*, the part of our system which requires the first reform. Well aware, as I was, that our schools were defective, I knew not how defective they were, till I had seen the good ones in Europe. Though the schools of Paris are the least good of those I have seen, even they show in glaring colours our deficiency. But I fear the most accurate description of foreign schools, and details the most minute of the modes of proceeding, will lead to little else than a knowledge of our deficiency, without essentially contributing to supply it. If a bit of cloth or a hat is to be manufactured in America, the most exact description of the manipulations of the English fabrics are inadequate. *Workmen must be, and are imported, who have been brought up to the work.* I have not yet found in history an example of any other method of propagating learning. In the very infancy of our colony, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures were translated into each other at morning and evening prayers at Cambridge.—It was done then by the emigrant English scholars, who filled the places of instruction in the infant College; and, as this importation ceased before the occasions of our state of society furnished the necessity, and the encouragement necessary to finished scholarship, learning *died out* among us—it was fairly *düsgestorben* [gone out] if I may borrow that expressive word; and, to own the truth, is not yet revived with us; *nor will it ever be, till brought over again from Europe.* No man can teach that which he has never learned; and no man can acquire himself that which is only to be gotten by external instruction, imparted according to methods formed and perfected by centuries of learned tradition.’

Such I believe to be the sentiments of every parent among us, who is solicitous that his sons should have a *finished education*,—an education, which shall reflect honour upon our national character in the persons of our young gentlemen who travel, and which shall enable those gentlemen to feel at their ease, when in the company of the most polite and learned circles of Europe. We are too apt, in this country, to consider

ourselves as an insulated people—as not belonging to the great *community of Europe* ; but we are, in truth, just as much members of it, by means of a common public law, commercial intercourse, literature, a kindred language and habits, as Englishmen or Frenchmen themselves are ; and we must procure for ourselves the qualifications necessary to maintain that rank which we shall claim as equal members of such a community. Of these, a finished education, conducted agreeably to the established usage of that community is, perhaps, the very first in importance ; and this is to be obtained most effectually by the method above pointed out. But until the period arrives when we shall have among us the ‘workmen themselves who have been brought up to the work’ of education, it will be of some service to make ourselves acquainted, as far as possible, with the methods which the ‘workmen’ of Europe have adopted ; and, with this view, I have thought it might be of some service to our countrymen to lay before them the following Translation of an admirable article on this subject from the pen of Wytttenbach, the well known professor in the University of Leyden. This distinguished man is already well known amongst us, as an eminent scholar ; but, perhaps, it is not so generally known (as my friend, above quoted, informs me is the fact) that he is considered by the English ‘as the best Continental scholar’ of Europe. The article in question constitutes the Preface to the *Ἐκλογαὶ Ἱστορικαί*, or *Selecta Principum Historicorum*, published by Wytttenbach, for the use of his pupils ;\* and though it cannot add to the authority of Wytttenbach’s name, to quote the opinion of any man in praise of the article, yet it may be gratifying to know in what strong terms it is spoken of by a scholar of some celebrity in another nation, who has himself been a practical instructor (in the classics) of young men intended for schoolmasters ; I mean the French scholar, Mons. Gail, first keeper of the MSS. of the King’s Library in Paris, who says this Preface of Wytttenbach’s is a work ‘*which no instructor ought to omit reading.*’†

\* I have used the *second* edition of this work, printed at Amsterdam, in 1808

† Gail’s *Cours Grec*, p. ii. of the Advertisement.